



McGregor W. Scott
United States Attorney
Eastern District of California

Sacramento
501 I. Street, Ste 10-100
Sacramento CA 95814
Tel (916) 554-2700
TTY (916) 554-2855

NEWS RELEASE

Fresno
2500 Tulare St., Suite 4401
Fresno, CA 93721
Tel (559) 497-4000
TTY (559) 497-4500

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2007

Contact: Rosemary Shaul, 916-554-2700

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae>

SECOND DEFENDANT SENTENCED TO PRISON
IN LASSEN COUNTY CROSS BURNING

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced that KEVIN WILLIAM RIDENOUR, 21, of Westwood, California, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Frank C. Damrell to two years in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release, in connection with the burning of a cross outside the rectory of a Catholic church in Westport, California on March 23, 2007. The Priest who resides in the rectory is from Rwanda, central Africa. Parole has been abolished in the federal system, and RIDENOUR will be required to serve at least 85% of the prison time imposed.

The other defendant convicted in the case, NICHOLAS EDWARD CRAIG, 18, also of Westwood, was sentenced on Monday, June 4, to 21 months in prison and a three year term of supervised release. Both defendants had pleaded guilty to interference with housing rights, a federal felony civil rights crime. According to Assistant United States Attorneys Benjamin B. Wagner and Sean C. Flynn, who prosecuted the case, defendants RIDENOUR and CRAIG in their pleas of guilty admitted that they burned the cross in front of the rectory in order to threaten and intimidate the Priest because of his race, and the fact that he was occupying the rectory building.

The case was investigated by the FBI and the Lassen County Sheriff's Office.

In sentencing RIDENOUR today, Judge Damrell told him about the seriousness of the offense, and the fact that hate crimes such as this one victimize an entire community. "This is not just a matter of making a mistake, or a joke," Judge Damrell said. "This is an evil act." Judge Damrell also told RIDENOUR that he should spend the next two years in prison reflecting on the seriousness of his conduct.

Assistant United States Attorney Wagner read a letter from the victim addressed to the defendants. In the letter, the priest cited the support he had received from the town of Westwood, thanked law enforcement for doing "the right thing," and told the defendants that he forgave them: "I am sorry you have had to learn from the hard way," the victim wrote. "I hope and pray that you will be changed men, working for good not for evil; even helping your friends who still are on the wrong way." Judge Damrell ordered that, while on supervised release

following their prison term, the defendants will be prohibited from contacting the victim or a witness from Westwood.

Through his attorney Ned Smock, RIDENOUR noted that he had pleaded guilty early on, that the sentence of two years included a hate crime enhancement under the federal sentencing guidelines, and that it was at the high end of the sentencing guideline range. RIDENOUR also apologized to the victim, stating that "what I did was wrong, and there was no excuse for what I did." RIDENOUR has been in custody since his arrest in Lassen County shortly after the cross-burning.

###